

7 March 1953

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[REDACTED] seems to feel that latest announcements concerning Malenkov's succession indicates attempt by Malenkov to give outside world appearance of united front. He does not feel that Malenkov is as yet firmly in control of governmental machinery and that the present power foundation of Malenkov's position is based on an "uneasy truce" between Beria, Bulganin and himself. Although Beria's position seems to be stabilized, the presence of Ignatied as one of the secretaries of the Central Committee, possibly functioning as a surveillor of Beria's security forces, gives rise to the possibility that if a purge occurs, Malenkov may replace Beria with his own man Ignatied.

The further announcement that the Praesidium has been reduced from 25 members and 11 alternates to 10 members and 4 alternates might indicate that already some of the followers of Stalin or of Molotov have been displaced. Molotov looms as the least powerful figure in the present coalition, having no extensive power structure within the army, Party, or security forces (MGB and MVD) and it is felt that Vishinsky's deposing was based on the same consideration.

One matter that should be borne in mind and that is the fact that Stalin as well as other lower echelon Party secretaries have an appreciable number of "cent-tail riders", and as we witnessed Zhdanov's followers being purged after Zhdanov's death, we might conclude that many of the members of the party and other apparati who were personally loyal to Stalin might be deposed from their positions within the Party, army and security structures. This might extend to lower district, city, and region Party organizations, and the Stalinist group within these lower organizations may not feel deposed to support Malenkov, especially if top echelon Stalinists begin to disappear.

One of the more important things to look for is the evidence of men from

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the Party apparatus being placed in control or in positions of power within the
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security or armed forces, since we can assume that Malenkov has fairly tight control over Party machinery and evidence of those loyal to Malenkov as party men going into the security or armed forces would indicate an attempt by Malenkov to solidify his position in those other power structures. Beria, however, still looms as a formidable opponent for Malenkov.

The reported return of Zhukov to Moscow might bear some watching, although the returned may be considered to add one more personality to the united front facade which Malenkov seems to want to create.

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